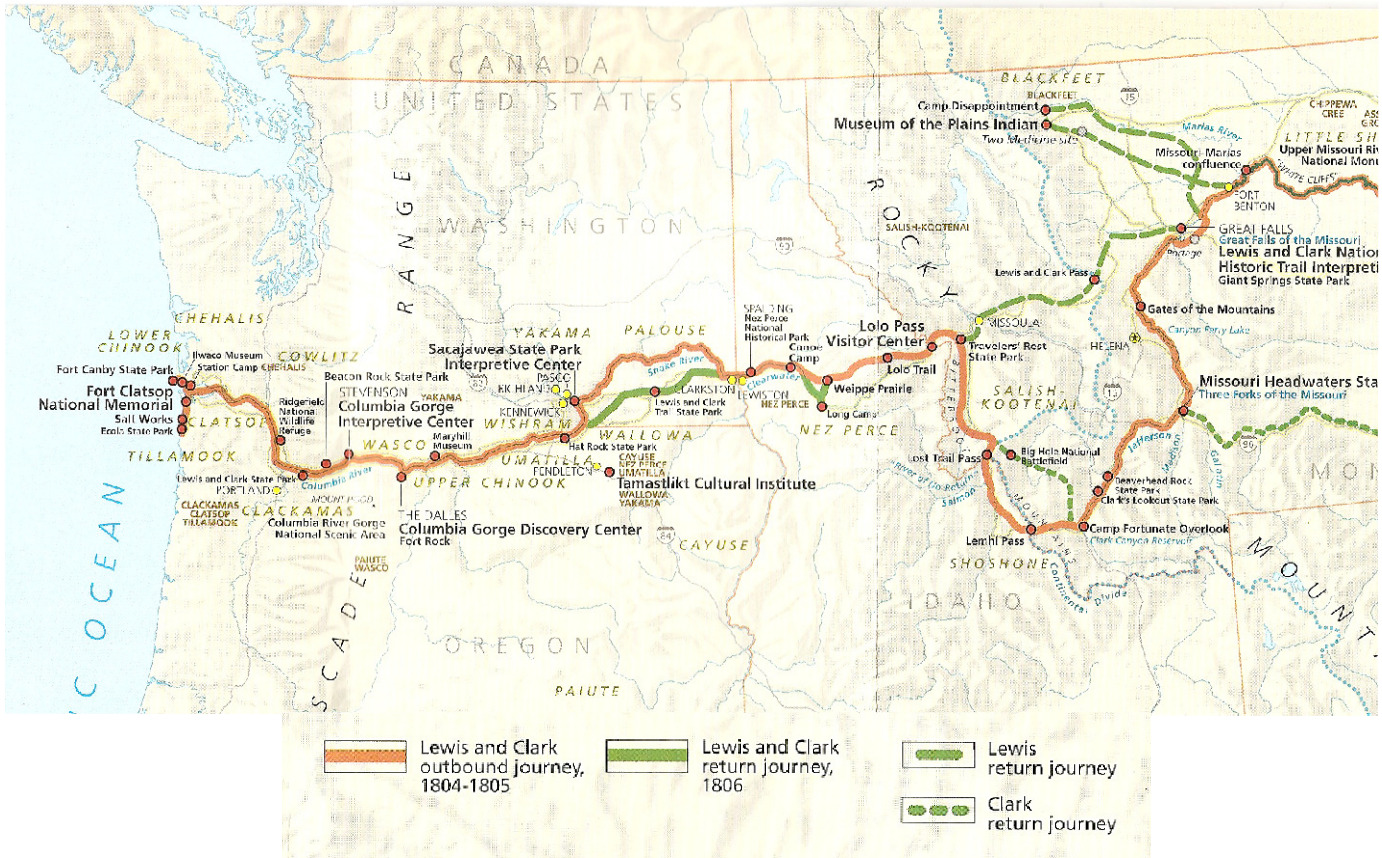


Headwaters of the Mississippi to the Pacific Ocean

Meriwether Lewis, January 8, 1806

From The Missouri Headwaters to the Pacific Ocean



In August-September, 2006 we followed the Lewis and Clark Trail from St Louis to the Headwaters of the Missouri River near Three Forks, Montana. A year later we completed the journey to the Expedition's end point near Astoria, Oregon where they wintered at Fort Clatsop between December 1805 and March 1806. In the spring and summer of 1806 they returned east, arriving to a heroes' welcome in St Louis on September 23 after a journey that took 2 ½ years.

23rd September, 1806

We rose early. Took the chief to the public store and furnished him with some clothes, &c. Took an early breakfast with Colonel Hunt and set out. Descended to the Mississippi and down that river to St. Louis, at which place we arrived about 12 o'clock. We suffered the party to fire off their pieces as a salute to the town. We were met by all the village and received a hearty welcome from its inhabitants.

Lewis and Clark Trail, Part Two. August-September, 2007

Monday August 27

We had planned to stay at the Airport Marriott tonight as we had a 7am flight Tuesday to Salt Lake City. So, we left home about 7:15 pm and had a very good dinner at Pho Paris at their new location in Covington. We then drove to the hotel and turned in.

Tuesday August 28, 2007

We were up before five and got the 5:15 shuttle to the airport. The airport was almost deserted (most of the early morning flights have been taken out over the past few years) so we were through Security very quickly. We were even too early for the Crown Room, which didn't open until 6am. So, we patronized Starbucks and had just a short while in the Crown Room before our flight. The flight left a little early and arrived in Salt Lake City about 35 minutes early at 8:15. This gave us time for a full breakfast and some time in the Crown Room before our 10:55am flight to Great Falls.

This flight was on a Skywest regional jet but was a smooth ride, albeit a little cramped. We had some great views of the Grand Tetons, Yellowstone Park and the Missouri River south of Great Falls before touching down soon after noon.

We spent most of the afternoon relaxing but we did pay a quick visit to one of the Visitor Centers to pick up literature and maps for our three days here in Great Falls.

We went to dinner at Jakers which we had enjoyed a year ago and had a very pleasant meal. My king crab legs were delicious. We ended the evening with an espresso sitting outside at Starbucks.

Wednesday August 29

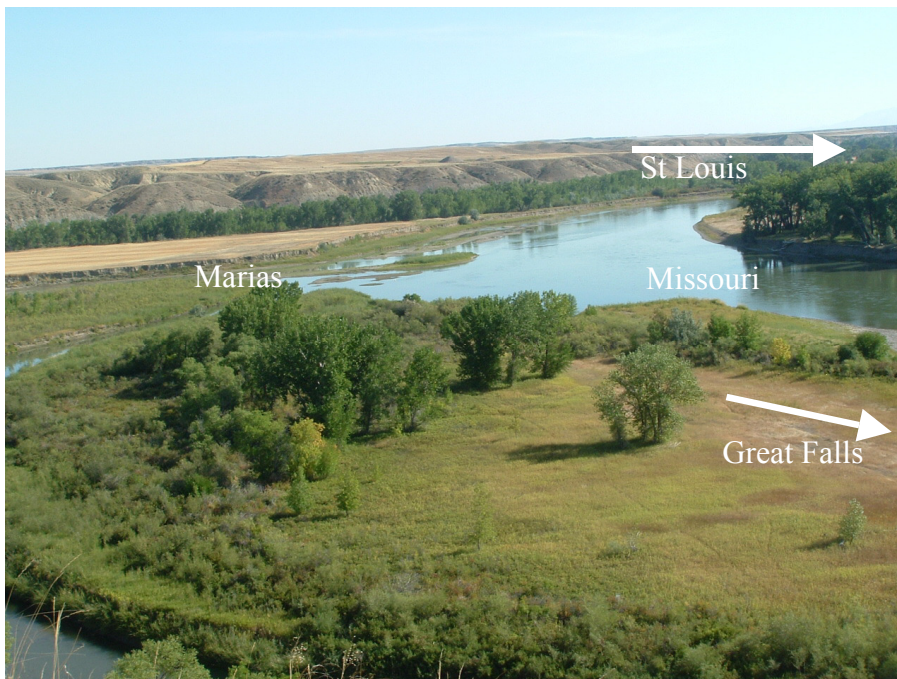
We were up early and had had breakfast and left the hotel by about 8:30. Today we drove northeast of Great Falls to cover a few points of interest that we had not covered during our visit last year. We took Rte 87 North which essentially follows the Missouri for about 40 miles and then continues north towards the Canadian border as the river heads in a more easterly direction.

The route is dotted with historic markers covering not only the Lewis and Clark adventure but the later events of the traders who followed as the west was opened up and the Missouri became a major thoroughfare not only to the western states but also to western Canada. In fact, there were major overland routes north and

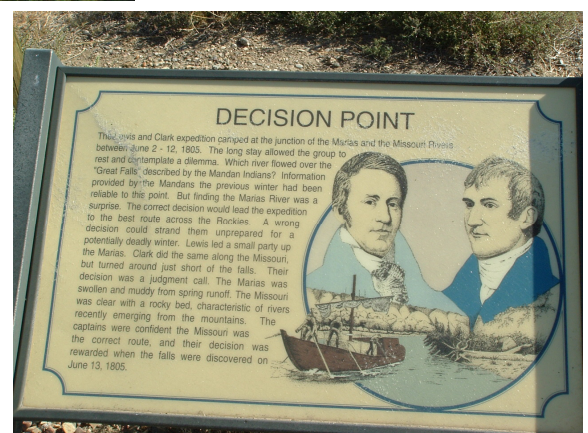
west from Fort Benton (about 40 miles from Great Falls) as this marked the end of the steamboat line from St Louis. The Falls a little further upstream made further river travel impossible. Our first stop was at Decision Point. This is at the point where the Marias River meets the Missouri and where Lewis and Clark camped for nine days while they tried to decide which fork (north or south) was indeed the continuation of the Missouri River to Great Falls.

We climbed a short rise to a bluff overlooking the confluence and today it seems obvious that the south fork is indeed the Missouri. However, Lewis and Clark were there in early June when both rivers would have been swollen from the melting winter snows and even now we could see how the Marias could well flood to several times the width we viewed today. The Missouri, on the other hand, seems to be more confined by steep banks at this point and could well have appeared a less likely choice. In addition, of course, both rivers have undoubtedly changed courses and flow rates significantly over the past two hundred years as a result of both natural and man-made causes, so it is easy to see how difficult the decision might have been.

It was not only a difficult decision (made only after exploring both options for 20-30 miles and



The Missouri River a few miles upstream from Decision Point



“Tough One”

examining features that suggested distance from a mountain source, etc) but an extremely important one. Time wasted here with a prolonged venture up the Marias may have made the crossing of the Continental Divide difficult before winter set in and would certainly have brought significant discouragement for the team. Only by reading the diaries of both leaders do you get a sense of the pain (both physical and emotional) that they went through before choosing what turned out to be the right course.

It is also interesting to note that only the two leaders thought that they had made the right choice. Every other member of the expedition thought that they should have taken the north fork. I guess this says something about leadership and also suggests that there are times when a “democratic” vote just doesn't work.

From Captain Lewis' Journal at Decision Point

June 3, 1805

"Capt. C. and myself concluded to set out early the next morning with a small party each, and ascend these rivers untill we could perfectly satisfy ourselves of the one, which it would be most expedient for us to take on our journey to the Pacific".

June 8, 1805

"The whole of my party to a man except myself were fully persuaded that this river was the Missouri, but being fully of opinion that it was neither the main stream, nor that which it would be advisable for us to take, I determined to give it a name and in honour of Miss Maria Wd. called it Maria's River".

June 9, 1805

"I indeavoured to impress on the minds of the party all of whom except Capt. C. being still firm in the belief that the N. Fork was the Missouri and that which we ought to take; they said very cheerfully that they were ready to follow us any where we thought proper to direct ... it was agreed between Capt. C. and myself that one of us should set out with a small party by land up the South fork and continue our rout up it until we found the falls".

June 13, 1805

"I retired to the shade of a tree where I determined to fix my camp for the present and dispatch a man in the morning to inform Capt. C. and the party of my success in finding the falls and settle in their minds all further doubts as to the Missouri".

We then decided to drive another 60 miles further north to the town of Havre. We did this, not because of any Lewis and Clark significance, but to see a little more of the terrain here and, as it turned out, to learn quite a bit more about the overland trade routes to Canada and the perils of negotiating with (and often fighting) the Blackfoot Indians.

The town of Havre itself was past its former glory and, although it had a few elegant buildings, it didn't appear that it had been maintained very well and many business were closed or for sale. It did have an espresso shack, however, which we patronized.

Then we drove back south to Fort Benton, which is a very attractive town right on the Missouri River. As I said earlier, Fort Benton was the "end of the line" for the steamboats from St Louis and the east and was the most inland port in the country. The original fort is long gone but this military outpost preceded the massive build up of commerce in the town which became a huge trading post in the mid 1800s. Many buildings from the era remain and much of the riverfront area is a National Historic Landmark. There were a number of hotels, the most elegant of which was the Grand Union built in 1882 and so-named as recognition of the end of the Civil War and the reunification of all the states.



Fort Benton: The reconstructed fort; Grand Union hotel; Culbertson hotel; Lewis, Clark and Sacajawea statue; The Missouri River through town; "Shep"

Unfortunately for Fort Benton, the railroad came across Montana in 1883 and this essentially did away with the need for the steamboats and, of course, the terminal here. Consequently, the town became less important and presumably declined in size and stature but it is nice to see that its former glory is being maintained and the town has done a great job in providing historic information markers all along its levee.

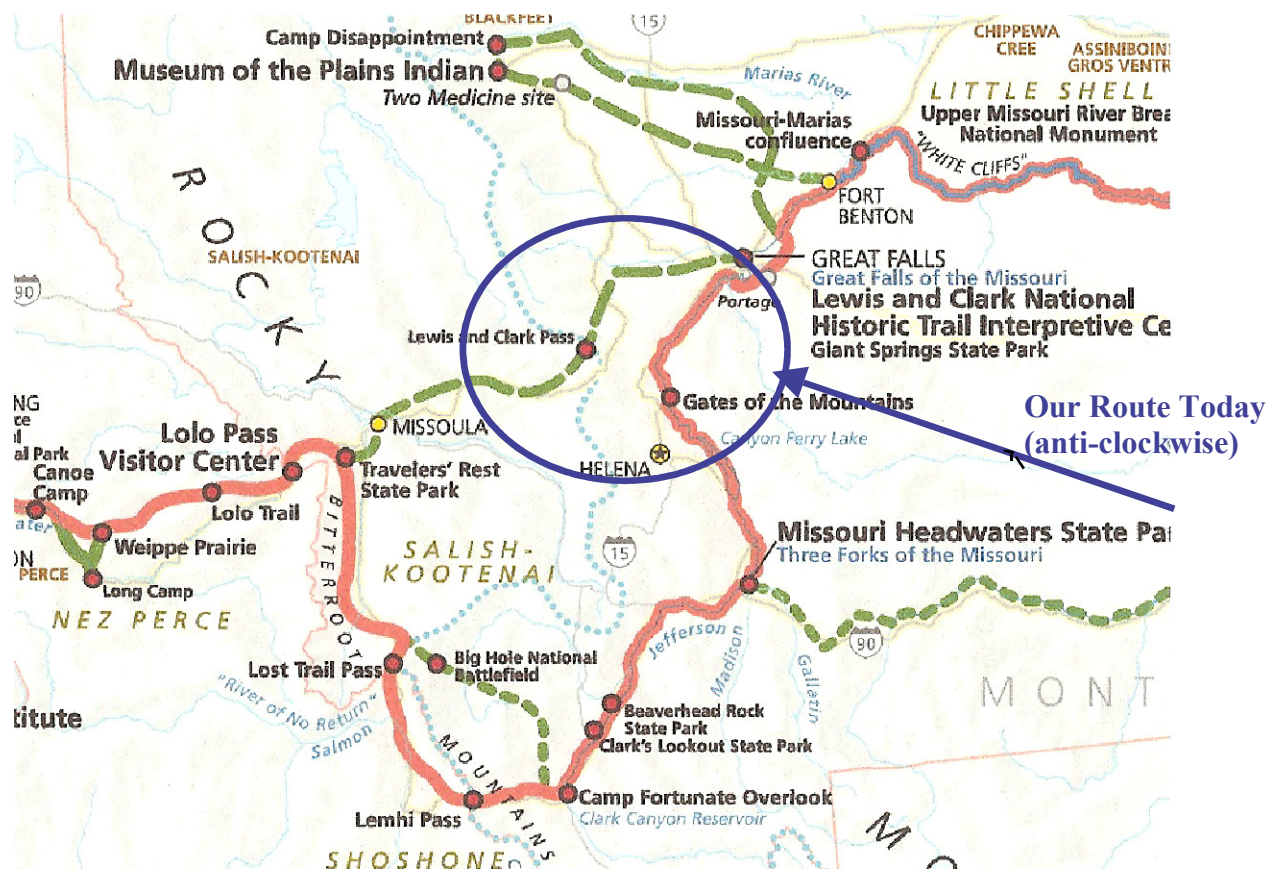
We visited the Culbertson hotel which had been one of the first in town and had been in the Culbertson family until 1946. In 2000, a member of the same Culbertson family bought it and it remains in that family today. Unfortunately, as we found out from the owner as we had coffee in what had been its main bar, he is about to retire to his ranch and the hotel is once again for sale.

One other interesting little point in Fort Benton was a statue of the dog Shep whose master died and his coffin was carried by train for burial in the East. Faithful Shep met every train coming into Fort Benton in the hope that his master would return. He did this until he met his fate by falling onto the track in front of an oncoming train. Apparently more locals attended Shep's funeral than had paid their respects to his master.

From Fort Benson, we drove the remaining 40 miles back to Great Falls and got back to the hotel about 5pm. We picked out a restaurant for dinner based on web information and a glimpse we caught of the building as we drove into town, so we were interested to see what Dante's Creative Cuisine was like! It turned out to be a very good meal in an old Iron Works building which had a nice ambience.

Thursday August 30

Today we decided to drive west of Great Falls towards Missoula on a route that roughly tracked Clark's team on their return from the west coast. Lewis and Clark followed different paths for parts of the homeward journey and, in fact, sub-divided into even smaller teams at times to do as much surveying as possible. These guys really took their charge from Jefferson very seriously.



After following Montana Rte 200 as far as Augusta (very small) we then drove south on an unpaved road for about 20 miles. This took us parallel to the mountains and, although most of the terrain was rolling farmland, there was one rather spectacular section that dipped steeply through magnificent rock formations to cross the Dearborn River. This crossing was on a "Pin connected Pratt half truss bridge" – apparently the only one of its kind in the country! More important from a historical perspective, however, was the fact that this crossing – and the entire route we were on – was part of an ancient Indian track which later became a major commercial route as the fur traders and then the gold miners came to Montana.



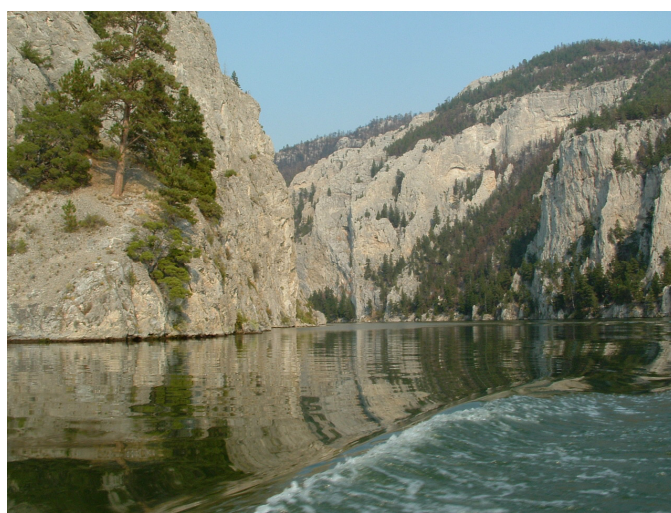
The route took us over the Continental Divide (at a relatively low 5100 feet) at a point near where Lewis had crossed back into the US (ie, the recently purchased Louisiana Territory) on his homeward journey. In fact, following a brief visit to the sleepy town of Lincoln (which was as far west as we went) we retraced our steps a little so that we could get a little closer to his actual crossing point. This necessitated a drive along a dusty unpaved forest road. After five miles, we saw a historical marker indicating that Lewis had stopped "near here" for dinner but, as the point of crossing the Divide was another five miles of driving and then a hike (according to one of our guide books), we decided to be satisfied at having seen where he ate! It is interesting to note that this overland section across the Divide to Great Falls took Lewis only eight days to complete whereas the outward journey had cost the expedition over two months! Still, if they had chosen this shorter route they would have missed the headwaters of the Missouri – and another goal set by Jefferson.



We drove back across the Continental Divide on another route that was even more scenic (and a little higher at 6100 feet) than the one we had followed west. This took us to Helena where we had a late lunch at which point we decided to see if we could get the last (3pm) sailing of the Gateway to The Mountains tour boat ride from a point about 20 miles north of Helena.

We made the departure time easily and had a wonderful 1 ¼ hour trip traveling down the Missouri about six miles and then returning upstream. The journey took us through a relatively narrow (few hundred feet) canyon with almost vertical limestone cliffs on both sides which reached a height of about 1200 feet. Damming of the river has caused the water level here to be about 18 feet higher than

it was when the Corps passed through but – as the guide book says – this is one of the few places where you can say definitively that you are traveling exactly the path of the expedition. Actually only Lewis and half of the men came through here as Clark and others were following a land route in the hopes of finding Indians from whom they hoped to procure horses for the anticipated portage across the mountains.



From Lewis' Journal:

"the towering and projecting rocks in many places seem ready to tumble in on us...this rock is a black granite below and appears to be of a much lighter color above. This extraordinary range of rocks we called the Gates of the Rocky Mountains.

"...the rocks approach the river on both sides, forming a most sublime and extraordinary spectacle. Nothing can be imagined more tremendous than the frowning darkness of these rocks*, which project over the river and menace us with destruction."

"The convulsion of the passage must have been terrible, since at its outlet are vast columns of rock, torn from the mountain, which are strewn on both sides of the river - the trophies, as it were, of a victory."

* On a beautiful sunny August afternoon we did not get this sense, but the expedition were passing here at dusk



Mountain Goats, Bald Eagle Chick and Memorial to the Mann Gulch Fire

Our pilot and guide on the boat trip was very good and gave us lots of information on the geology and flora and fauna of the area as well as observations about the expedition and even quoted Lewis to add color to his talk. In addition to the limestone cliffs, with their fascinating features, we also saw mountain goats, bald eagle, many water fowl and birds and a couple of osprey nests. We also heard of the fire-fighting efforts of this summer (which still continue and had closed a scheduled stop on the tour) and of a major fire-fighting disaster which took place here in 1949 and which prompted much improved knowledge and skills on fighting large forest fires.

In all, the trip was a bargain at \$10 per person and worth it for the scenery alone. The fact that it covered the only bit of the Lewis and Clark Trail that we will experience by water made it all the more special.

We then drove by way of I-15 the seventy miles back to Great Falls and relaxed for a little while before getting ready for dinner. Tonight we went to Breaks Brew Pub which was much nicer than the name suggests and had some very interesting dishes. My Asian noodles with lobster was good and spicy and Molly enjoyed her walleye.

Friday August 31

Today was our day to stay in (or near) Great Falls and do a few of the things we had missed last time we were here. First we went a few miles south of town to the Ulm Pishkun State Park which is home to one of many buffalo jumps in Montana. This one is said to be one of the largest with about a mile of sheer cliff over which the buffalo were made to fall from a large grazing area on top of the butte. There is a small but informative interpretive center and a series of walks that can get you as close to the top of the jump as you are willing to climb.

We both set out on the 2+ mile circular hike but Molly stuck to the more level ground while I followed the narrow, rocky path which took me within a few feet of the highest point. The walk took a little over an hour but was worth the effort to get to the ledge beneath the highest point of the cliff and see the spot where the first impacts would have been made by the falling herds.

The method used to get the buffalo to "jump" was for a young Indian to dress in buffalo calf skin and cajole the "lead" mother of the herd into running towards the edge. The Indian jumped over himself to a pre-determined safe spot and the near-sighted buffalo simply followed. Even those that might have seen the problem were pushed over by the thundering herd behind them. Obviously not any butte would serve well as a jumping spot as the buffalo had to first get to the top of the drop area in a more or less natural grazing mode (they were "shepherded" by the tribe). This particular one had a huge horse-shoe shaped grazing area (which

we saw clearly when we subsequently drove to the top) so was ideal. It also was home to thousands of prairie dogs and apparently the dogs and buffalo complemented each other well. It's interesting that there are still thousands of prairie dogs here – and not a single buffalo. This time, however, it's not Darwin but the rest of mankind at work!



**Ulm Pishkun*
Buffalo Jump from
below (top) and
above, with its only
remaining inhabit-
ants**



***The park was re-
named the First
Peoples State Park
just two weeks be-
fore our visit “to
evoke a sense of
unity, peace and
cultural sensitivity,”**



From the park, we drove back to downtown and had planned to spend some time in the central area but didn't see a lot to attract us. So, while sitting outside at Starbucks enjoying our “lunch” we looked at our guide books and re-planned our afternoon.

We first went to a spot on the river quite close to downtown where Lewis had been chased into the river by a grizzly bear. His journals recorded that the bear was within 20 feet of him and his unloaded gun; he had just fired his shot to kill a buffalo. A narrow escape!

We then went to two dams down river which we had visited a year ago but which we wanted to see again. The first was Ryan Dam which was built above the Great Falls in the early 1900s. When we were here a year ago it was in early September and the primary observation area – on an island in the river below the falls – was closed, being open only through the end of August. This year of course we were just in time and were able to cross a rather shaky suspension bridge to the island and get some great “head-on” views of the falls. Obviously they are not the spectacular sight that Lewis came across as most of the water now passes through the power plant to one side of the dam and only a relative trickle crosses over the rocky ledges of the falls. However, it is still possible to visualize the almost 100 feet wall of water that seemed to boil the river below and which created a sound that he heard many miles downstream. Not only was it a most spectacular sight but it vindicated the choice made a few days earlier at Decision Point.



**No bear today - but lots of pelicans
(Lewis and observed them also)**



The Great Falls of The Missouri

From Ryan Dam we drove an additional three miles downstream to Maroney Dam which is really just another hydro-electric facility on the Missouri and was not built near any immense falls in the stream. However, from a bluff just a short walk further downstream you are able to look down the Missouri River at a stretch that has no visible man-made objects and which must look essentially the same as it did 200 years ago. The river level may be a little different as a result of the dams but to all intents and purposes we were seeing exactly what the Corps saw. In fact, Lewis himself walked very close to this spot to a sulfur spring only about a mile away to get medication that cured Sacajawea of a stomach malaise and may well have been another expedition-saving event as she was badly needed to negotiate with her fellow tribesmen for horses to take the Corps over the Rockies.



The Missouri north (downstream) of Great Falls; we both had to savor this view which must be almost exactly what Lewis saw

Our final stop for the day was at the Giant Springs State Park on the other side of the river. We had visited here last year but it is such a beautiful spot that we wanted to see it again. Here a series of springs feed a pool which in turn is the source of the shortest river in the world. After flowing for a little over 200 feet from the springs it enters the Missouri.



We then returned to the hotel after a very pleasant day within a few miles of town and hence concluded our “catch up” time in Great Falls which helped bridge the gap between our 2006 and 2007 journeys along the Lewis and Clark Trail.

We went to dinner at Dante’s which we had enjoyed on Wednesday night and had another good meal.

The Giant Spring and the shortest river in the world

Saturday September 1

Today we checked out of our hotel in Great Falls and headed to a two night stay in Helena. Helena is only about 90 miles south on I-15 but we decided to take an alternative route to the east. This necessitated a re-trace of our journey into Great Falls a year ago for about 80 miles but it was very scenic through the Lewis and Clark National Forest and the Little Belt Mountains. This brought us to White Sulphur Springs, which was little more than a re-fueling stop, albeit a very busy one as people stocked up for picnics and other gatherings on this Labor Day weekend.

We then turned west again and had some great views of the distant Rockies as we climbed through the Big Belt Range to Townsend. Here we found a nice little coffee shop where we sat outside on a sunny but breezy morning enjoying coffee and doughnuts. The skies were much less smoky today than they had been for the past four days and the air was much fresher.

From Townsend we headed north along the eastern side of the Missouri River – we were now only a few miles north of the headwaters in the area that Sacajawea had recognized as being close to her childhood home and her native tribe. The river is much changed, however, and in fact is a lake about 30 miles long and several wide as a result of the Canyon Ferry Dam built to provide power to Helena.

There were no Lewis and Clark sites defined on this side of the lake but at the head of the lake (near the dam) was a visitor center where we found the ranger to be extremely knowledgeable on the Lewis and Clark trek through this area and the whole of Montana. He showed us a 20 minute video of the journey through this state and told us of several sites that we should visit on the western side of the lake. Obviously, the campsites are now under water but he claimed that the views are very similar to the ones that the Expedition would have seen. Our plan for the onward journey from Helena is to see some of these areas as well as re-visit the headwaters. We also want to spend a little time in the city as we only scratched the surface last year.

We checked into our hotel in Helena a little before 4pm after a day on which we had seen little of the Lewis and Clark items but one of very pleasant scenery. We went downtown for dinner tonight to the Silver Star Steakhouse and had an excellent steak.

Sunday September 2

We spent the morning in downtown Helena. We parked at the “bottom” of Last Chance Gulch and spent two hours walking up this street and then back on the parallel Park Avenue.

Last Chance Gulch is so named because it was on the last chance (before abandoning mining here) that gold was found and the rush began. Last Chance Gulch (much of which is now a pedestrian walkway) is lined with large buildings from the late 1800s built as a result of the gold money and, later, more general commerce. Helena has done a good job in maintaining and/or restoring many of these buildings and there are some fine examples of Victorian grandeur. Many of the major players in those days seemed to want to leave not only a financial legacy but also some permanent reminder of their success – and their place of business fit that bill perfectly.

At the end of Last Chance Gulch are two rows of brick cottages built up the hillside (Reeder Alley) and which became the more permanent miners' homes after the initial tent city had sprung up. These buildings have survived almost 150 years (including a devastating earthquake in 1935 which destroyed many of the larger structures) and are a tribute to the Philadelphia mason (Reeder) who came out to build them as soon as he heard of the gold rush.

After two hours of walking and a refreshing coffee break we drove slowly through the "mansion district" of Helena, a series of streets covering perhaps 10 blocks square where those who had made their money downtown built their luxurious homes. Again, there are many huge stone built homes from the turn of the 20th century, each demonstrating the wealth that came from mining and the later commercial successes of the area. Presumably once Helena had been designated the capital of Montana this brought additional wealth to the city. In any event, the mansion district is still a beautiful tree-lined area with many very nice homes. Our final stop downtown was at the St Helena Catholic Cathedral which, along with the Capitol, can be seen from almost any part of town. This 100 year old church is a twin-spire, almost European structure with some classical statuary on its front face. Inside, however, it is even more impressive and has some fantastic stained glass windows that were contracted to a German company and would fit equally well in any of the fine European cathedrals. In fact, other than perhaps the National Cathedral in Washington, DC, we couldn't think of any cathedral in this country that could come anywhere close to this in its interior beauty. Certainly not what would be expected in the middle of Montana wheat country!



Last Chance Gulch and some of its fine buildings



Early Miner's Cottage; Reeder Alley with its more permanent housing; Pioneer Cottage



The Mansion District and the magnificent Cathedral

Helena, Montana



To finish our day we drove out to Canyon Ferry Lake (along which we had driven yesterday) and took a short drive along the unpaved west side. There were many private homes right on the lake and several public picnic and bathing areas with superb views over the water. Also, of course on this Labor Day weekend the lake was filled with boats of every shape and size on a bright, sunny and hot afternoon. After watching the activity for a while we returned to Helena and relaxed at the hotel until dinner time.

Tonight we took a 10 mile drive down the expressway to the RJ Montana Grill, which had been recommended in the hotel literature. It's about five miles beyond a similar steakhouse. As with most restaurants in Montana, it seems, "steakhouse" is a very broad term and fresh fish and seafood feature significantly on the menu, despite being at least 1000 miles from the nearest ocean. Unfortunately, this turned out to be a poor choice as much of our meal was cold and the service was not up to par. Still, it was the first bad experience so far and we salvaged the evening with late night coffee and dessert back at the Starbucks in Helena.

Monday September 3 (Labor Day)

We had breakfasted and checked out by 9am and set off on Route 12 which runs southeasterly from Helena. After about 30 miles we turned off this road onto a gravel road which paralleled the Missouri on its west side. From this road there were several Lewis and Clark stopping points covering points of interest they had seen as well as several of their campsites.

At one stop we were able to take a short hike right down to the river's edge and get a good view of the Crimson Bluffs that Lewis had noted and which are truly red at this time of day with the sun in the east. We also saw York's Islands which were named after the Black slave who accompanied the expedition and who proved to be very useful, not only for his hunting prowess and general "heavy lifting" skills but also because he got along well with the Indians on the route who had never seen a black man.



The Crimson Bluffs and York's Island

July 22nd, 1805

The Indian woman recognized the country and assures us that this is the river on which her relations live, and that the Three Forks are at no great distance.¹ This piece of information has cheered the spirits of the party, who now begin to console themselves with the anticipation of shortly seeing the head of the Missouri, yet unknown to the civilized world. The large creek which we passed on starboard, 15 yards, we call White Earth Creek from the circumstance of the natives procuring a white paint on this creek.

On returning to the main road it was only another 15 miles to the Headwaters State Park where the Expedition declared success at having determined the beginning of the Missouri River. As we had observed last year during our visit here, it is a little difficult to see why they claimed this spot as the headwaters because the Madison and Jefferson Rivers join here about ½ mile upstream from where they are joined by the Gallatin. The best explanation we got was from a park ranger who said that the Indians had said for generations that the "Mighty River" (Missouri) was formed from three other rivers, so Lewis and Clark were merely endorsing the ancient description.



They made it.....and so did we!

July 28, 1805: "both Capt. Clark and myself corresponded in opinion with respect to the impropriety of calling either of these streams the Missouri and accordingly agreed to name them after the President of the United States and the Secretaries of the Treasury and state having previously named one river in honour of the Secretaries of War and Navy. In pursuance of this resolution we called the S.W. fork, that which meant to ascend, Jefferson's River in honor of Thomas Jefferson. the Middle fork we called Madison's River in honor of James Madison and the S.E. Fork we called Gallatin's River in honor of Albert Gallatin. the first two are 90 yards wide and the last is 70 yards. all of them with great valocity and thow out large bodies of water" Captain Lewis

We stopped in the small town of Three Forks for a light lunch and then followed the Jefferson River (as had the Corps) further west and then south. Along this route there were several other points of interest from the journey and a couple of spots where decisions had to be made as the river continued to split into additional tributaries. They continued what they had named the Jefferson River but today it is called the Beaverhead and extends all the way to Dillon, our destination for today.

Another major point of interest was Beaverhead Rock, about 10 miles from Dillon. This is an unusual butte (although not much like a beaver to us) which was (and is) a very prominent landmark. More important, Sacajawea recognized it as the place where her Shoshone Tribe had spent their summers so it was a great uplift for the Corps as this meant that the Indians (and the horses the team needed) were not far away.

Finally, in the town of Dillon itself there is another promontory (less than 100 feet high) which Clark had climbed to view the distant mountain ranges and to plot the course for the next few days. It is also another spot where you can say that you stood in an exact spot that Clark had – so we did!



Beaverhead Rock



Clark's Lookout



The two restaurants that we had selected as likely ended up sharing a pizza at Pizza Hut; an excellent alternative to the fine dining we have done so far.

We checked in the hotel in Dillon (a typical one street western railroad town nowadays) and found out that we had booked for two nights despite the fact that we had convinced ourselves it was a one night stand. We are trying to decide which it will be!

After consulting the map and our guide books we decided to keep the two nights in Dillon and use the full day tomorrow to do a circular route that would take us out on the Expedition's route over Lemhi Pass and back to Dillon along a part of Clark's overland journey on returning east the following year.

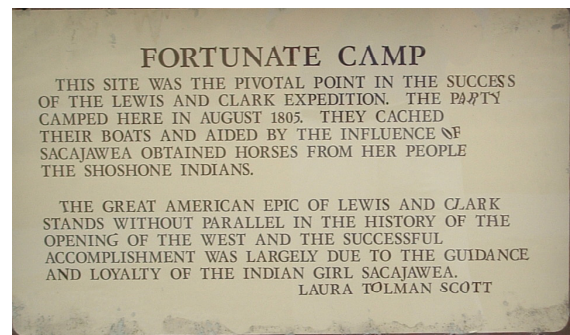
for dinner were both closed (Labor Day) so we

Tuesday September 4.

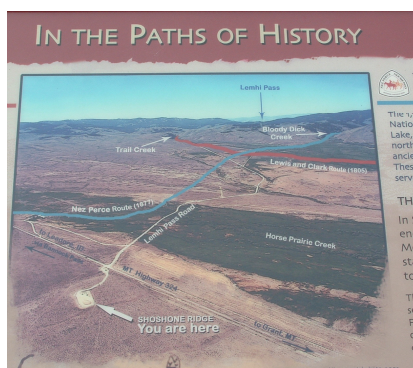
Today was the first on which we woke up to an overcast sky and the forecast called for a chance of rain for the next two days. However, after a filling fried breakfast at Grandma's Kitchen (in the hotel parking lot) we set off into the mountains and some threatening weather.

Our first stop was at Clark Canyon Dam, 20 miles south of Dillon, where we stopped at the Lewis and Clark Monument in a very attractive little park next to the dam. The damming of the Beaverhead (what Lewis and Clark called Jefferson's River) in 1964 had formed this reservoir and, unfortunately, had covered an important campsite of the Corps. While Clark and part of the team were dragging their canoes up the now shallow stream to this point, Lewis and a small party hiked ahead over the Continental Divide (30 miles or more) searching for Indians – and, more importantly, their horses. He followed essentially the route we would be taking over Lemhi Pass and actually found the Shosone after two days of hiking. He persuaded them to return with him to the camp we were now overlooking (albeit under water today) where Clark was waiting.

It was here – at what they called Camp Fortunate – that Sacajawea not only recognized the Tribe as her own, but also recognized a childhood friend and, most amazingly, her own brother who by now was chief. Fortunate, indeed, as this made not only for very friendly relationships between the Corps and the Indians but also must have significantly aided the negotiations for horses and guidance that would take them over the Rockies.



Our next stop was at the Lemhi Pass visitor center which comprised several information boards on the route and its importance over the years, not only to Lewis and Clark but to many Indians before them and to the miners and other pioneers that headed west later in the 19th century. Then it was on to the gravel road which would take us about 30 miles to the almost 7400 feet pass.



The Road to Lemhi Pass and our only companions.

The road was actually quite easy to navigate on the eastern slope – not too steep and not too many sharp curves. Most of the way it was a wide single lane with passing places but today we pretty much had the road to ourselves. At the top we parked for a while to admire the views in all directions, to stand astride the Continental Divide (or as Lewis and Clark saw it, the border between the United States and unclaimed territory) and to simply take in the feeling of that great adventure over 200 years ago. I walked a little way back down the eastern slope in an attempt to see the stream that the Corps had said was the actual start of the Missouri (the true headwaters). I did see a narrow creek (only a couple of feet wide) down the steep hillside to the east of the road and settled on this as being close enough to call it “the top”. Since this was Sacajawea country, there is also an area set aside to commemorate her contribution to the success of the Expedition just a quarter mile from the summit.



**The Continental Divide
at Lemhi Pass with views
to west and east.**



**The true (?) headwaters
of the Missouri and the
Memorial to the aid
provided by Sacajawea**



Then it was down the much steeper and winding western side of the Pass along which we saw the trail that Lewis had taken to find the Indians in his scouting trip and we also saw a narrow stream that was now headed downhill towards the Salmon River. I chose to call this the headwaters of the Columbia River and actually found a spot where I could stand astride it. This unnamed stream does indeed become the Lemhi River which flows to the Salmon and then to the Snake which finally enters the Columbia River so I felt justified in claiming to have stood astride the Columbia River head.

It was a further 12 miles of steep grade (now in Idaho, not Montana) before we reached a paved road near Tendoy, which, after an additional 20 miles, brought us to the town of Salmon and the Salmon River. Here we stopped for a late lunch before continuing north along US93 in Idaho.



About 20 miles north of Salmon the main fork of the Salmon River headed due west but Lewis and Clark had concluded that it was too filled with rapids to provide a suitable route for them and their cargo.

In August of 1805, just after crossing the continental divide, Lewis and Clark ventured down the Salmon River, but found it to be too rough to be navigable. Clark wrote:

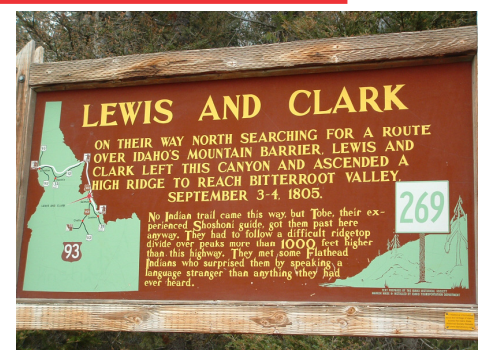
"...I shall in justice to Capt. Lewis who was the first white man ever on this fork of the Columbia Call this Louis's river. ...The Westerly fork of the Columbia River [the present Salmon River] is double the size of the Easterley fork [the present Lemhi River] & below those forks the river is ...100 yards wide, it is verry rapid & Sholey water Clear but little timber."

The honor didn't last long; by 1810 maps of the area were already referring to "Louis' River" as the Salmon. Clark had thought that the Salmon River was the Snake River, thus he called it the "Westerly fork of the Columbia". The Snake River retained the variant name "Lewis River" or "Lewis Fork" longer than did the Salmon. (Wikipedia)

Consequently, they continued up the north fork of the Salmon overland for an additional 110 miles (near present day Missoula) before they found an appropriate western route. Until we get there tomorrow, I'm not sure how much more overland they had heading west before they reached navigable waters.

I do know, since we made the climb, that the road north rose steeply to Lost Trail Pass at the Montana border and Continental Divide once more. Here we turned east to start our return trip to Dillon but will be here again tomorrow as we go on to Missoula.

Just before reaching this highest point for today, we suddenly ran into a lot of thick smoke. Ever since we arrived in Great Falls a week ago we had seen and smelled smoke from the still-burning forest fires in this area but this was far thicker than anything we had experienced to date. By the time we reached the small town of Wisdom, 26 miles from the pass, we could see massive smoke filled areas (no flames, but obviously they were present) and we saw lots of fire-fighting equipment and personnel. We passed a



camp of perhaps 50 tents and many vehicles which clearly had been in position for some time and presumably would be there for perhaps weeks to come. From Wisdom we headed in a generally southerly direction away from the fires and the skies gradually cleared but we wonder about the more northerly route that we hope to take tomorrow.

From Wisdom to Jackson and then on to Dillon we were tracking reasonably well with Clark's return east in 1806 but surprisingly there were no markers to identify camps, specific route or things encountered on the way. Whether this is as a result of minimal journal entry (which I doubt) or lack of interest in the return path we don't know, but it was the first time we had covered a 100 mile stretch without any acknowledgment of the Expedition.

We did make one final interesting stop however at Bannack State Park about 20 miles from Dillon. Bannack had been a thriving gold mining town (the first in Montana) and had briefly been the capital of the Montana Territory. It was occupied from about 1860 until well into the 20th century but is now a ghost town. Many of the original buildings still stand, however, along a single main street and almost all are open to visit. Apparently it was one of the most lawless towns of the Old West until local vigilantes tried to clean it up and it eventually became a tourist town as well as a center of commerce.



Bannack with its Main Street, Hotel, Church, Miners' shacks, Jail and ornate Masonic Temple

We arrived back in Dillon about 6:30 (having seen essentially no rain all day) and had just enough time to clean up before going to dinner at the Blacktail Station restaurant which turned out to be very nice and we both enjoyed our meals.

Wednesday September 5

We spent about an hour at the Dillon Museum before leaving town for Missoula. The museum had a diorama of the Lewis party leaving Camp Fortunate to go over the Continental Divide in search of Shoshone and their horses. In addition, the annex to the museum was just filled with "stuff" from the pioneer days and later; something like a smaller, less well-organized version of the museum in York. It was the type of place where you could happily spend much more time but we felt we had to get on our way.

We drove north on I-15 for about 40 miles and then headed west on Montana Rte 43 along the Big Hole River. This was very picturesque with a variety of flat lands and massive cuts through mountain ridges, all accompanied by the river.

We were surprised that the air was much clearer today than it had been yesterday when we were in this area and, in fact, at the town of Wisdom where the huge fire-fighters encampment was situated, the air was clear.....and cool. We found out why when we reached the Big Hole National Battlefield Visitor Center and were told that there had been a good downpour overnight. The fires were still burning nearby, however, after one and two months respectively so the camp was not about to be removed any time soon. In fact we saw another, even larger encampment about 30 miles west of Wisdom as we moved on after visiting the battlefield.

The Big Hole Battlefield is where the Nez Perce Indians were ambushed by the US Military in a battle that marked the beginning of a 1700 mile wandering for the tribe as it tried to flee the authorities who were trying to force them into a much smaller reservation.

The battle here was particularly brutal and the site is maintained as a permanent memorial to the mostly women and children who were killed and is visited by the Nez Perce each August in commemoration of the tragedy. It followed Custer's Last Stand (only a couple of hundred miles from here) by seven months but in this case the Native Americans came out losers in a big way since they not only lost people in the battle (almost 100) but in effect lost their fight for their homeland. It was Big Chief Joseph of the Nez Perce Nation who eventually said enough is enough and negotiated a small but permanent reservation near the Canadian border.



The Big Hole Battlefield

From Big Hole we soon reached US93 at the Lost Trail Pass from where we traveled north all the way to Missoula. There were a number of roadside information boards pertaining to the Lewis and Clark trek along this Bitterroot Valley as they headed north to find an easier route across the very impressive Bitterroot Mountains off to our west. Interestingly, they were in this area at exactly this time of year and it is only today and one day in Omaha last year where we and they took exactly the same path on exactly the same day.



The peaceful Lemhi River but formidable Bitterroot Mountains to the west

We reached Missoula a little after 5pm and checked in for three nights. This is as far north as the Expedition reached in these parts before crossing Idaho and connecting with the Snake River. Missoula itself doesn't have a lot of Lewis and Clark items but is in the middle of some gorgeous scenery; only about 150 miles from Glacier National Park. Nevertheless we will spend some time (as we often do) as to why we chose three nights here and fewer further down the road.....and, who knows, we may make a field change. Something for dinner time discussion – which tonight was at the Outback just a few blocks from the hotel.

Thursday September 6

Having decided to stick with our three nights here, we chose today to spend in Missoula and take a self-guided walking tour of the historic downtown area. This is a roughly 8 by 8 block area on the north side of the Clark Fork River and the buildings here date from the late 1800s.

The booklet and map we obtained from the Visitor Center provided us not only with a route but also with a brief description of about two dozen buildings, all of which were on the National Historic Landmark list. A Mr. C.P. Higgins was a co-founder of the town and his name still appears on many buildings, streets and alleys. There are some very fine structures, many of which have been restored, including a very elegant hotel which was twice destroyed by fire and rebuilt – the last time in the 1930s.

There is also a very fine railroad station dating from the late 1880s and a beautiful Jesuit church with a large number of murals ceiling paintings and stained glass windows. The county courthouse, built in 1908, is also an elegant building which would not be out of place as a state capitol.



Missoula
**Clockwise:
 Clark's Fork River; Late 1800s
 Downtown buildings. The train
 depot; County Courthouse;
 Jesuit Church; Tree-lined Pine St.;
 "Mecca".**



It was a great day for walking – it was partly cloudy and relatively cool – so we thoroughly enjoyed our four hours strolling through the area. After the walk and a little shopping we decided to make it a short day and returned to the hotel for a rest period before dinner. Tonight we ate at The Depot (near the train station) and had an excellent meal; probably the best so far.

Friday September 7

We were up a little later today so it was almost 10am before we left the hotel to take a drive north of Missoula. We followed US 93 North as far as Kalispell, which is probably less than 40 miles from the southern end of Glacier National Park. The route was primarily through the Flathead Indian Reservation and for perhaps half of the way we were alongside Flathead Lake – the biggest fresh water lake west of the Mississippi.



The road did not hug the lake but we did get some panoramic views as the route took some climbs from lake level. The weather was overcast and cloudy and we did go through a few short showers but then the sun would re-appear. It stayed cool, however, not getting out of the low sixties until very late in the afternoon. We stopped at several Historic Markers along the route, although none were Lewis and Clark related as they didn't travel this far north. Mostly the information was about the Indians of the area and the traders who eventually forced them into this reservation. Again, as we had seen with other US- Indian relationships, the treaties signed with the Government were a continuing source of contention and irritation to the Native Americans and one can't help but feel sorry for the way they were treated and the change in lifestyle that they were forced to make.

One unexpected stop was at a Catholic Church originally set up as part of a mission in the late 1800s. The original log cabin homes are still there and the brick



built church is magnificently decorated inside with murals and ceiling paintings – much like the one we had seen in Missoula yesterday.

In Kalispell we stopped for lunch and then returned south by way of the road that runs down the eastern side of the lake. This road does hug the lake for much of its length and is also close to the Mission Mountains so the scenery is quite spectacular. There were also a large number of orchards on this stretch with cherries being the most abundant crop for sale at the moment.

Once back on US 93 we went towards Missoula but turned off about 50 miles north to visit the National Bison Reserve. This is a several hundred acre reserve set aside to provide a home for bison, elk, deer and many species of birds and water fowl. The route through the reserve is much like a self-drive safari along a 17 mile unpaved road that climbs 2000 feet above the huge valley that we had been driving. Most of the route is steep and full of hairpin bends but the views are spectacular.



**National
Bison
Reserve**



We did see many deer of different varieties, at least four bull bison and perhaps an elk. A bear had been spotted earlier in the day, we were told, but we didn't see him. The bison herd is allegedly quite large so we felt a little unlucky to have seen only a few but the two hour drive was well worth the detour.

We got back to the hotel at 6:30 which gave us just enough time to clean up before going back into town for dinner. Tonight we ate at the Red Bird restaurant which is in the historic Hotel Florence and had a great meal in very pleasant surroundings.

Saturday September 8

We left Missoula about 10am and drove eight miles south as far as Lolo and then turned west on US 12 which we followed for the rest of the day.

Our first stop was at the Travelers' Rest State Park in Lolo which was a camp where the Corps stayed both on the westward and homeward journeys – a total of seven days. One of the more interesting aspects of this site is that it is perhaps the only one where archeological evidence has been found that defines this absolutely as a Lewis and Clark camp. What is still more fascinating is that the campsite had been marked (as a National Historic Landmark) about 2 miles distant from the place we visited today and it was not until extensive scientific work done in 2002 that the evidence convincingly placed the camp at its present site. As a staff person told us, it is the first time that a National Historic Landmark has been moved!

The layout of the camp, evidence found at the latrine site and even a military uniform button were used in addition to carbon dating to put this place at the right spot on the map. It was important to the Expedition and their Indian guides as it marked the starting point for the hardest part of the journey over the mountains before they found the tributaries of the Columbia River which would allow them to get "back on the water". We spent about 45 minutes here walking the short trail through the encampment area.



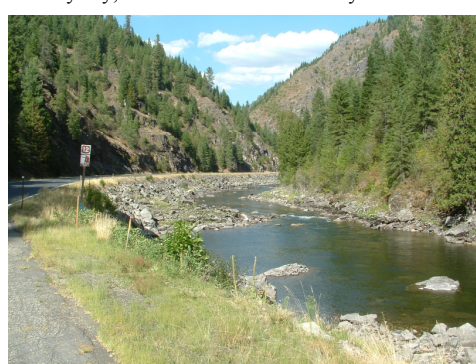
Travelers' Rest at the beginning of the Lolo Pass; re-enactment of the Lewis and Clark camp was taking place

Next we stopped at the Lolo Pass, which is right on the Montana-Idaho border at an elevation of 5225 feet. Here there was another short walking trail to an overlook of another Corps campsite which has been set aside from the logging industry's axe as a permanent historic site.

From Lolo Pass the road gradually descended westward alongside the rivers (names kept changing as one fed the next) along a very narrow gorge with exceptionally steep hills on either side. Driving the route today one wonders why the Corps didn't simply follow this easy path just a few feet above the river rather than following a ridge along the mountain top that paralleled the road – but 1200 feet further up.

The answer, of course, is that the road has been blasted out of the hillside and the sides are so steep that the horses could not maintain a footing at any point except the top of the ridge. The Indian guides knew this as these trails had been used by them for hundreds of years; another example of the very important role that the Native Americans played in the success of the Expedition.

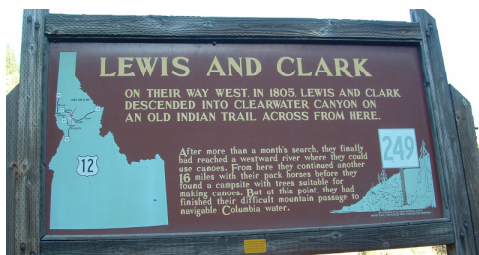
This route is also a part of the Nez Perce Trail and there were many historic markers and information boards describing their culture and life as well as their forced expulsion from this area by the US troops that ultimately led to the Battle at Big Hole that we had visited on our way north to Missoula. The road we were on was also marked as the Northwest Passage Scenic Byway, so there was a lot of history associated with our drive today.



Famous Trails and Beautiful Scenery Through the Bitterroots

We also stopped at a small private museum which was filled with Lewis and Clark items, including a huge library, and at several other sites which had been camps for the Corps or had had Nez Perce significance. And all of it was in the most dramatic and beautiful scenery you could imagine on a glorious blue sky day.

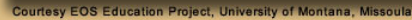
Finally, as we were within 40 miles of the Washington border we saw three more important sites. The first was a camp that Lewis and Clark had stopped at for a month on the return journey to allow several sick men to get better and to re-stock for the trek over the mountains. Then we saw the spot where Lewis and Clark decided that the river they were following (The Clearwater at this point) was navigable and would eventually take them down the Columbia. It was not clear, however, just exactly how they were sure of this point. What was clear was that at this point they had no canoes so they hiked another sixteen miles downstream to a wood where they camped and made the canoes that would transport them to the Pacific Ocean. So, after over a month on the overland route, they were once again on the river and heading to their destination.



After an absolutely gorgeous day of driving through some of the most spectacular scenery anywhere, it was difficult to imagine just how difficult the same journey had been for the Corps of Discovery and their Indian guides. What we had done in one day had taken them two weeks through some of the worst weather (snow, sleet and rain) and terrain (steep hillsides with little footing for the horses and a trail strewn with fallen timber). The following excerpt from Lewis' Journal of September 18, 1805, together with a brief entry by Clark for the same day gives a little insight into their difficulties.

18th Sept. 1805

A fair morning. Cold. I proceeded on in advance with six hunters. Made 32 miles and encamped on a bold running creek passing to the left, which I call Hungry Creek, as at that place we had nothing to eat.



The Story of the Lewis and Clark Expedition as told in sidewalk etchings, Clarkston, WA

We then decided to take a short drive out of town on a loop that would bring us back alongside the Snake River after first climbing into the hills of eastern Washington. No sooner had we left town, however, than we came across a ten mile serpentine road that had originally been built (for the automobile) in 1913. Despite the fact that it took us right back to Clarkston, we couldn't resist this exciting switchback ride.

Then we followed our original plan and drove about 30 miles to the university town of Pullman where we had a late afternoon coffee stop. From there we went along another winding canyon road (The Snake River Canyon) back down to the Snake River, which we then followed back to Clarkston at river level. The scenery was magnificent; steep volcanic cliffs to our left and the wide river (more like a lake in parts due to damming) on our right. It was a beautiful ride under a cloudless blue sky with a very pleasant temperature in the mid-eighties.



We went back to Rooster's Landing for dinner but this time sat outside and watched the sun set over the Snake River. Fantastic!

Monday September 10

We left Clarkston and headed west on US12 on the south side of the Snake River. We followed this for about 10 miles and then the river turned in a northerly loop and we continued directly west over the Alpowa Summit (2785 feet). Although we had left the river – and the Expedition's route west – we were still seeing lots of Lewis and Clark historical markers because this was the "short cut" that they took on the way home. In effect, they omitted the long river route via the Snake River and followed an old Indian Trail, specifically recommended by Indian guides. This is the so-called "Forgotten Trail" of the Lewis and Clark journey but saved them a lot of upstream paddling on the way home.

After about 50 miles we left US12 for a 20 mile detour to Palouse Falls State Park. This was billed as having one of the most picturesque waterfalls in the state of Washington but is of significant historical interest as these are the only remaining falls created by the huge Lake Missoula glacial floods 15,000 years ago. We had been in the huge valley that was a part of the lake a few days ago when we drove north from Missoula and here we were 200 miles further west and still in what had been the enormous water basin.



This diversion also allowed us to cross the Snake River once more at a point where the Palouse River enters. Lewis had named this Drewyers River after one of the Corps, translator Drouillard. (Lewis' spelling was never very good).

The climb from the crossing of the Snake to the State Park was only a few miles but steep until we were on top of what appeared to be a vast plain. This plain was gouged, however, by a significant canyon (over 200 feet deep) and it was into this canyon (and the Palouse River) that the waterfall cascaded. Although we could

see what appeared to be a small lake feeding the falls, it wasn't clear what was "behind" that which would allow such a big falls to run continuously. Whatever the source, the waterfall was quite dramatic as it fell into a deep pool which fed the river and well worth the detour.



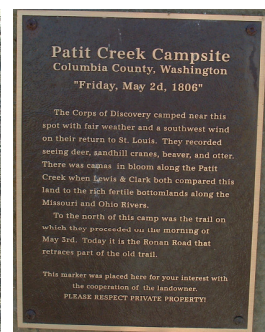
The waterfall, Palouse River and canyon resulting from the vast Lake Missoula

Back on US12 we continued west to the small town of Dayton. Here we had coffee and walked a few blocks along the main streets. We also saw the oldest railroad depot in Washington, dating from 1887.

A few miles outside Dayton was a most unusual Lewis and Clark trail site. The Corps had camped here on their return journey and this was commemorated by a field full of iron sculptures (in silhouette) representing every member of the party, a couple of Indians and many horses. It really was a well done piece of artwork that also provided an almost "real-life" look at one of the Expedition's campsites.

May 1st, 1806

Some time after we had encamped, three young men arrived from the Wallawalla village bringing with them a steel trap belonging to one of our party which had been negligently left behind. This is an act of integrity rarely witnessed among Indians. During our stay with them, they several times found the knives of the men which had been carelessly lost by them and returned them. I think we can justly affirm to the honor of these people that they are the most hospitable, honest, and sincere people that we have met with in our voyage.



We made one other stop on this route at Walla Walla. Our guide book had listed Fort Walla Walla museum complex as pertaining in part to the Lewis and Clark Expedition. However, when we got there (and had paid the entrance fee) it turned out to have very little Corps relationship and was primarily a collection of pioneer homestead equipment, machinery and home contents. I suppose with another agenda than the one we had this might have been an interesting attraction but with time running out and with there being so little Expedition information, we gave it a "lick and a promise" and continued on to our destination of Richland, Washington.

Our hotel was located on a small bay which has an active marina as it feeds directly into the Columbia River which we could see from our window. At last, we are on the final river of the Corps of Discovery and, although it will be the end of the week before we reach the ocean, the end seems to be in sight. I suppose that's how Lewis and Clark and the entire team must have felt at this point also.

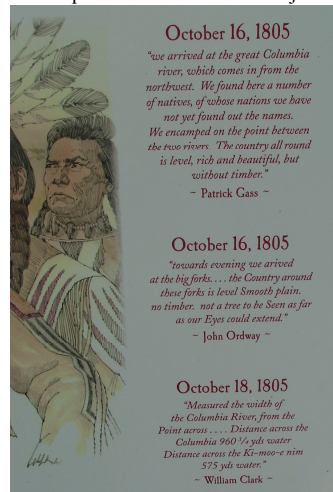
We feel that we are in familiar territory now as we have been along the Columbia just west of here several times over the years, although this will be the first in which we will be concentrating on Lewis and Clark sites. There are several here in the tri-cities area which we plan to visit tomorrow.

For dinner we walked to a restaurant on the marina (we could see it from our room) called Anthony's Home Port. It's part of a western chain that includes several in Seattle so we anticipated some good seafood. And indeed it was good; together with an excellent view of the sunset over the Columbia from our outside seating.

Tuesday September 11

After breakfast, we visited two local Lewis and Clark sites in the Richland area. The first was the Sacajawea State Park which is right at the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers and where the party camped on their outward journey. The view of the two rivers is clearly much different now than it was 200 years ago; the scrub and prickly pear cactus has been replaced with marinas, docks and bridges over the river. The park, however, does provide a green area right at the point so it still represents a significant stop on our journey today.

In addition to the park, with its information boards and historical information, there is a small but well done museum which covers Sacajawea's contribution as well as quite a lot of detail on the journey as a whole.



side below. Five Indians came up the river in great haste. We smoked with them and gave them a piece of tobacco to smoke with their people, and sent them back. After getting safely over the rapid and having taken dinner, set out and proceeded on seven miles to the junction of this river and the Columbia, which joins from the northwest.⁴

We halted above the point on the river Kimoonim to smoke with the Indians who had collected there in great numbers to view us.⁵ Here we met our 2 chiefs who left us two days ago

At last.....the Great Columbia River

A few miles up the Columbia there is a Lewis and Clark overlook at a point near where Clark and a few men journeyed upstream from their camp. They had been told of the entrance of another river into the Columbia near here (The Yakima) and decided it was necessary to get a look for themselves, even though their voyage was in the opposite direction.

In the afternoon we made an aborted attempt to visit the Hanford Test Facility Visitor Center north of Richland, only to find out that it had been closed for several years! This despite the fact that it appears on our 2007 road map. We did, however, spend about 45 minutes at a small, private museum in town which provided a pretty good history of the Manhattan Project activity and the subsequent Cold War work at Hanford. It would appear that most of the activity on this huge site nowadays is concerned with clean up and storage of the nuclear materials.

For dinner tonight we found a very quiet Thai restaurant close to the hotel and had a pleasant meal; a little different from the fare we had been used to so far on this trip.



Up the Columbia to the Yakima River - just to take a look!

Wednesday September 12

We checked out of the Richland Courtyard and drove about 30 miles to cross into Oregon at Umatilla at which point we headed east for a few miles to visit two state parks. The first was an overlook of the Columbia River near another Lewis and Clark campsite and the second – just a few miles further east – was called Hat Rock State Park. This park had a short walking trail to the base of a volcanic “nut” which Lewis and Clark had said looked like a hat – which indeed it does.



Hat Rock State Park



The Columbia River with its pockets of industry.....and one of its more leisurely forms of transportation



We then drove about 40 miles along the south (Oregon) side of the river before crossing over into Washington to the Maryhill Museum, in the grounds of which was a Lewis and Clark Sculptural Overlook. This turned out to be a series of information boards but arranged around a modern art sculpture; nothing really new or different except it had spectacular views of the river both upstream and down.

While on this side we made an aborted attempt to see the Celilo Falls, which we never did find but had been significant falls in the river at the time the Corps came through. (We made a similar attempt on the Oregon side later but were thwarted there also as the land was now restricted to members of certain Indian tribes only). In any case, the large numbers of dams on the Columbia have wiped out any rapids and falls that would have existed 200 years ago and the river is now essentially a series of narrow lakes with very little evidence of flow in any direction.

On the Washington side we did pay a brief visit to a concrete reconstruction of Stonehenge which was built by one Sam Hill as a war memorial to the fallen from this area in World War I. Apparently, Mr Hill was quite a character and philanthropist in the early 20th century and built the first paved road in Washington, planned the bridge across the river at this point and put up this unusual war memorial.

Back on the Oregon side we stopped next at The Dalles for coffee and a brief look at the town. We have stayed here a couple of times and so didn't see the need to spend a great deal of time in town. Chief amongst its Lewis and Clark attractions are a series of murals on downtown buildings. These also cover aspects of the Oregon Trail as well as Native American culture and life.

We then continued on another twenty miles to Hood River where we checked into our hotel right on the river. From our balcony we had a superb view of the river, particularly in the upstream direction. We decided to eat at the restaurant in the hotel tonight as its menu looked interesting and it provided outside dining overlooking the river; the food and service were good, also, especially for a hotel restaurant.



Thursday September 13

We left Hood River in bright sunshine once again, although it was quite cool as we crossed over the river to spend the rest of the day on the Washington side. Our first stop was at the Columbia Gorge Interpretive Center which had some Lewis and Clark information but its main attraction was a description of the formation of the Gorge. There was a 20 minute movie which showed how the gorge had formed as a result of extremely violent volcanic action followed by a series of floods as the glaciers advanced and retreated with each successive ice age. The museum was also packed with local history artifacts and historical data; an amazing three floor building in a very small town.

Next we stopped at an overlook where we could just get a view of the bridge over a very narrow part of the gorge, called the Bridge of The Gods. As recently as 900 (one information board said 500) years ago a mountain (Table Mountain) on the Oregon side of the river had erupted and sent a mass of rock down into the gorge which formed a land bridge at this point. It wasn't clear for how long the land bridge was maintained as such but obviously the river eventually found its way through. It is still very clearly the narrowest point on this stretch of the Columbia, however.

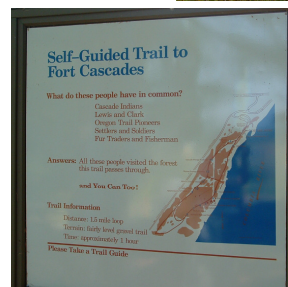


The Bridge of the Gods and the still-constricted Columbia

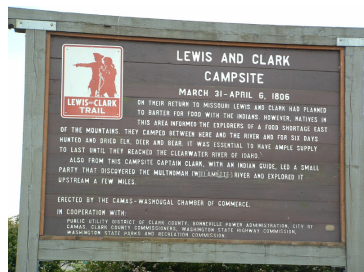


Further downstream we stopped at a very pleasant park called the Fort Cascades National Historic Site. Lewis and Clark called it Strawberry Island. The site commemorates four different forts that once guarded the Cascades Rapids in the mid 1800s, as this was by now becoming a significant commercial center for fishing. A few remnants of the fish wheel and the tramways and rail-ways that crossed this area still remain but its chief attraction is the very pleasant walk through a heavily wooded area. Once again we were reminded how many places (often very small towns or villages) do a really good job in preserving their heritage and making it pleasant for visitors.

Another example of this was at our next stop at the Captain William Clark Park at Cottonwood Beach. This is an area near where the expedition spent about a week on their return at a point on the river with a broad sand beach.



“Strawberry Fields” and evidence of the industry that followed



Although it was a little difficult to find on the edge of an industrial park, once we got there we were again treated to a well marked trail and information boards along a ½ mile stretch of the Columbia.

Between these two very pleasant spots was a stretch of the Columbia with steep banks on both sides and additional evidence of the tremendous forces of nature that had helped form this landscape over the millennia. One such point was Beacon Rock, a volcanic monolith which, at 850 feet tall, has been claimed to be the second largest free-standing monolith after the Rock of Gibraltar. Lewis and Clark were the first to name it, although they both referred to it as “Beaten Rock”. Whether this

is what they intended or another example of their imaginative spelling is not for me to decide.

“... a remarkable high detached rock Stands in a bottom on the Stard Side near the lower point of this Island on the Stard. Side about 800 feet high and 400 paces around, we call the Beaten rock. ...” [Clark, October 31, 1805]

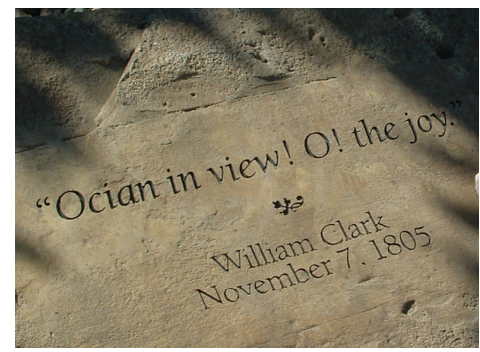
“... a remarkable high rock on Stard. Side about 800 feet high & 400 yds round, the Beaten Rock ...” [Clark, November 2, 1805]



It was also at Beacon Rock that Lewis and Clark first measured tides on the river, indicating their long journey was nearing an end.

Shortly after these stops we were in the urban area of Vancouver (a Washington State extension of Portland, OR) and remained on expressway and in the middle of heavy traffic for over 50 miles. Then we turned west once again to re-join the river after its swing in a large northerly arc. Then we were in heavily forested land with good views of the river as the road followed its path and occasionally climbed to a few hundred feet above water level.

Our final stop of the day was at the Skamokawa Vista Park which is where Lewis and Clark first claimed to be within sight of the Pacific Ocean. An information board pointed out that there is a line of sight that would project from this point to the open sea but questioned whether the earth's curvature and weather would allow an actual sighting. Nevertheless, they fully recognized that they were now in a tidal river and certainly felt justified in claiming success, although they still had about 30 miles to travel. There was "Joy in Camp" at being "in sight" of the Ocean.



We then continued on to the bridge that spans the estuary and took us to Astoria, Oregon where we checked into our hotel right on the water and in sight of the bridge. We, too, felt that we had made it.

I should mention that the bright sunshine that we started with at Hood River this morning soon faded as the clouds rolled inland from the ocean. It never got much warmer than about 63F and at some stops where there was a stiff breeze, it felt down right cold – particularly after the fantastic weather we have had for the extent of the trip so far.

Tonight we ate dinner once again overlooking the Columbia River, this time from the Baked Alaska restaurant on the Astoria waterfront. Another very good meal.

Friday September 14

Today we went back across the bridge into Washington to visit the final Lewis and Clark sites on the river before they settled in Oregon for the winter.

Our first stop was "Dismal Nitch" (so named by Clark) where the Corps spent five miserable days toughing out an early winter storm that kept them on a tiny inlet barely big enough for them to camp. They were unable to row against these winds but were visited by Chinook Indians who came across the river (about 4 miles wide at this point and right in line with the ocean) in their canoes, causing Lewis to claim them the best canoeists he had ever seen.

When they did get out of this Dismal Nitch, they set up camp at Station Camp just a few miles downstream and were able to stay there for eleven days – and presumably get everything dried out! They didn't waste time here, however, and both Lewis and Clark went out with small parties to survey the region. This is the area now covered by Cape Disappointment State Park and up the peninsula as far as the vacation town of Long Beach. It was also while they were in Station Camp that they had to decide where they would establish a "permanent" winter encampment, since obviously they were not about to start back east until the spring. Should they stay here on the north side or find a more suitable site across the estuary in the area of present-day Astoria?

November 12th, 1805

Our situation is dangerous. We took the advantage of a low tide and moved our camp around a point to a small wet bottom, at the mouth of a brook, which we had not observed when we came to this cove, from its being very thick and obscured by drift trees and thick bushes. It would be distressing to see our situation—all wet and cold, our bedding also wet (and the robes of the party which compose half the bedding are rotten, and we are not in a situation to supply their places), in a wet bottom scarcely large enough to contain us, our baggage half a mile from us, and canoes at the mercy of the waves, although secured as well as possible—sunk, with immense parcels of stone to weight them down to prevent their dashing to pieces against the rocks. One got loose last night and was left on a rock a short distance below, without receiving more damage than a split in her bottom. Fortunately for us, our men are healthy.



"We are now at the end of our voyage, which has been completely accomplished according to the intention of the expedition, the object of which was to discover a passage by way of the Missouri and Columbia rivers to the Pacific ocean..."
(Sergeant Patrick Gass, November 16, 1805)

Station Camp
The members of the Lewis and Clark Expedition pulled their canoes onto this beach on November 15, 1805. Their 18-month journey had taken them up the Missouri River, across the Rocky Mountains, and down the Snake and Columbia rivers. They camped here for ten days near a Chinook village, and traded with the Chinook people for fish, roots, and wild vegetables.

An important decision
To stay here or to find a wintering place that was not too cold and where elk or deer would provide meat and furskins to replace their ragged clothing. They also needed assistance to make the trip.

Station Camp
The first observation recorded the known latitude and longitude of their starting point at the Lewis and Clark monument, with the location of the mouth of the Columbia established in 1792 by Captain George Vancouver. Nowhere else in the journey did he so precisely determine their location.

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An historic vote was taken on November 24, 1805 to decide where the expedition would spend the winter. Everyone had the opportunity to vote, including York and Sacajawea - the first voting by a Black and a woman in US history? The majority voted to cross the Columbia River and look for a site that would provide hunting, salt-making, and the possibility of attracting a passing trading vessel.

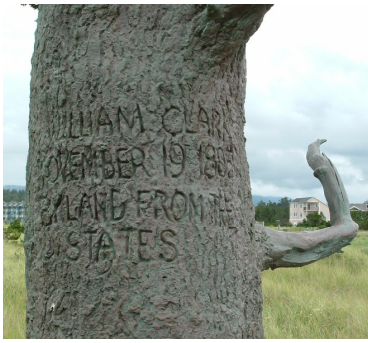
From Agony at Dismal Nitch to Ecstasy at Station Camp

The State Park has an excellent Lewis and Clark Interpretive Center with sketches, paintings, quotations and other items that bring the whole journey to life. There is also a very good 16 minute movie which concentrates on the time spent on the west coast and its impact on the United States and the world. This and the Interpretive Centers in St Louis and Great Falls are probably the best along the entire journey, which is to take nothing away from the dozens of other excellent sites we have visited in our two trips.

From the State Park we drove north to Long Beach, which at first appeared to be a typical one street seaside town with lots of souvenir and ocean recreation paraphernalia shops. However, we spotted a nice little tribute to Lewis and Clark right in the middle of town; a small plaza in which was a statue of Clark carving his name on a tree near here and a series of plaques representing the many stops that the Corps had made in getting to this point. The plaques were formed from many different stones and took several forms so I wondered if they had been donated by the respective towns.

We then drove just a little further north where we followed a walking trail to the actual tree that Clark had carved. Actually, it is a bronze replica of the tree, the original having been lost to a storm. Now there are no trees along this shoreline (except a few recently planted firs) so again it raises the question as to how much the landscape might have changed over the past two hundred years.

Further down this 8 mile Discovery Trail along the beach are other items of interest, including the skeleton of a beached whale that has been set at a spot near where Clark had seen the bones of a whale when he was here. The one here today had been beached much more recently and buried on the beach. Permission was given for it to be exhumed, cleaned and placed here as a lasting tribute to the Expedition and to the furthest point west that they traveled.



Clark's Tree and *The Pacific Ocean*



We then drove back to Astoria and went downtown for a late afternoon coffee before returning to the hotel – but not before making a dinner reservation for later. Tonight we ate at the Silver Salmon Grille in downtown and had another very good meal.

Saturday September 15

We checked out of the hotel, had a McDonald's breakfast and then visited the Visitor Center to get information on self-guided walks of the downtown historic district. We purchased one small booklet that had two tours of the commercial center of town and spent a very enjoyable couple of hours strolling around and admiring the architecture as well as learning a little more about the early history of the town.

Despite it having been established in 1811 (only six years after Lewis and Clark came here) the architecture is mostly from the 1920s as Astoria suffered two disastrous fires, the second being in 1922. Nevertheless, it was still interesting to learn about the businesses that had flourished here and to see a number that have existed almost as long as the city has. The predominant ethnic influx seems to have been Scandinavian, largely Finnish, which presumably reflects the importance of fishing to the inhabitants of the area. Or maybe they just liked the climate – wet and cool!

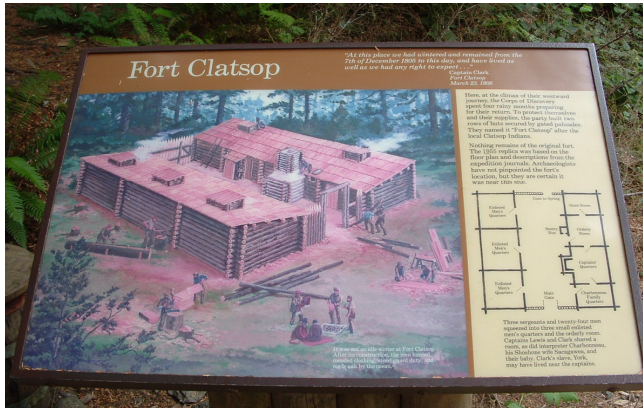


Astoria, founded 1811

We had seen an information board at the Visitor Center suggesting a circular tour through Clatsop County which we thought might be a pleasant drive for tomorrow, so we re-arranged our itinerary to stay in Astoria one more night.

In the afternoon we took the short drive to Fort Clatsop National Park. This is the region where the Corps decided to camp for the winter of 1805-06 before heading back east. The spot they chose is just a few miles upstream on the Lewis and Clark River (formerly called the Netul) which runs north into the southern side of the Columbia a few miles before it reaches the ocean.

Here is a reconstruction (apparently the latest one in a series, others having been burned) of the small fort that the Corps built to provide shelter for the four month wait before going home. The rooms are not very spacious (even the two Captains shared a room) but they must have seemed like luxury apartments after some of the encampments they had endured over the previous 18 months. They certainly needed a solid roof over their heads as it rained all but a handful of days throughout their stay.



Fort Clatsop; Winter Quarters December 12, 1805 - March 17, 1806

There is also a short trail which leads to the river where they landed with their canoes and a series of information boards not only of their exploits while here but also identifying the flora that they found and catalogued. Once again we were impressed with the extent to which the National Park Service (in this case) had gone to provide easy walkways to points of interest. Finally, there is another movie presentation – this time told from the perspective of an Indian woman who had visited with the Corps and which covered the trading and relationships that resulted from the prolonged stay. Cultural differences are highlighted (for example, the Indians always invited visitors into their homes for food and lodging whereas the Corps closed down their camp at dusk and didn't offer any meals) and there is perhaps the slightest hint of defiance as a current generation Chinook Indian states emphatically "We are still here" to end the movie. After everything I have seen about the treatment of the Native American as Euro-Americans took over, I certainly hope so.

We returned to the hotel in Astoria late afternoon after truly completing the journey and our own Voyage of Discovery. What an amazing trip it has been and what a great way to spend two 3 week long vacations.

Tonight we went to a brand new restaurant on the river called Bridgewater Bistro. In addition to the regular a la carte menu, they had a series of "small bites" from which you could select tapas-style. We chose about five items to share – a combination of seafood and meat dishes – and complemented them with a bottle of local wine. Excellent!

Sunday September 16

It was overcast again and rain was promised for later in the day. We had two stops to make before driving back to Portland. Both were in the town of Seaside about 20 miles south of Astoria. The first was the salt-making facility that Lewis and Clark had set up near the beach about 10 miles from Fort Clatsop. They had a small detail stationed here for over a month making salt 24/7 for the return journey. A plaque indicates that the site chosen for the reconstructed ovens is probably right where they had their setup since a woman in 1900 remembered her father talking about the "white men making salt at this spot". Interestingly, the movie we saw yesterday at Fort Clatsop was a re-enactment of (presumably) this same woman telling her children (in 1841) of the Corps' stay here and her father's recollections.



The salt making facility near Seaside, OR, about 10 miles From Fort Clatsop



Our final stop for the journey was in the center of Seaside where a statue has been erected commemorating “The end of the trail”, which provided a fitting completion to our journey from St Louis.



The End of The Trail, Seaside, Oregon

So, here we were, after driving 3000 miles from Great Falls this year (and the 3130 miles to the Missouri Headwaters last year) at the end of the Lewis and Clark Trail. We felt a sense of accomplishment with our journey and marveled even more at the Corps of Discovery for whom this had been an 18 month adventure of epic proportions and one that significantly impacted the expansion of the United States and ultimately had a profound impact on the history of the world. We spent the early afternoon driving through the rain back to Portland where we checked into our hotel about 3pm. Tonight we ate at Salty's on the Columbia River about 5 miles from the hotel. We had eaten there a couple of years ago and enjoyed it and tonight we had an excellent meal made all the more enjoyable by our waitress who was really interested in our trip.

Monday September 17

Today we drove to Salem, about 50 miles south of Portland. Salem is Oregon's capital and we spent a very pleasant two hours in and around the Capitol and strolling through about 10 blocks of the historic downtown area. Again, we had a brochure (obtained in the Capitol) that highlighted about 15-20 buildings and gave a short description of their architecture and history.



Salem: The State Capitol and downtown buildings

We then drove back towards Portland but detoured a little to visit the Oregon Garden, a privately owned 80 acre landscaped area. The gardens and forested areas are beautiful and it was very nice on a warm afternoon to stroll along the winding paths and see the great variety of flora in bloom.

We then returned to the hotel, emptied the back seat of the car which had been gathering stuff for three weeks and relaxed until we once again went to Salty's for another excellent dinner.

Tuesday September 18

We were up at 8am, had a little breakfast and then turned the car in at the airport. We were quickly checked in and through security so we had over an hour in the Northwest Airlines lounge before our 11:40 flight to Cincinnati. This was on time and uneventful and we arrived home about 8pm after another wonderful trip in which we learned a lot of history and native culture.

